# Northeast Nature Notes

News and Events from the Missouri Department of Conservation • Jan/Feb/March 2013



# **Ice Fishing**

A Cure for Cabin Fever

**D**eer season has just about wrapped up and unless you're interested in calling predators or chasing bunnies there is not a whole lot to do outdoors, right? Wrong.

With recent cold temperatures and a forecast for more of the same, there is fishing—that is ICE fishing—to be done in North Missouri. Ice fishing in Missouri can be quite unpredictable compared to the northern states, but with a couple weeks of frigid temperatures many small ponds will be covered with safe, fishable ice.

The gear needed for ice fishing is simple. The most expensive item that you will need is an ice auger to drill through the ice. Most augers run from \$40 to \$60 and can be purchased at local sporting goods stores or through outdoor catalogs. Next, you will need an ice skimmer or kitchen ladle to scoop out the slush and ice from your freshly drilled hole.

You will also need a small, two to three foot long, ice fishing rod. You can make one out of a broken fishing rod with a piece of dowel rod for the handle. An old monofilament spool can be attached to hold the line, or you can tape on a small spinning or spin cast reel. Use the lightest line possible; two to four pound test works best.

A bucket is handy to carry all of your equipment and can double as a seat once you begin fishing. Some experienced anglers erect an ice fishing tent or shanty. These are small shelters that will keep you out of the wind and blowing snow as you fish.



Panfish, such as bluegills and crappie, are the most popular and easily captured fish through the ice. They prefer brushy cover, especially near deep water. An old creek channel is the ideal location to try. If you are going after panfish, small teardrop hooks or jigs baited with wax worm or minnows work best. Some anglers like to use a small bobber, and others prefer a small spring bobber attached to the end of the rod that will detect the slightest bite.

Another option is a clever device called a tip-up. Tip-ups suspend bait in the water near good fish habitat. When a fish takes the bait a flag is released, or tipped up, that warns the angler of a bite. The fish can freely strip line from the spool until the angler sets the hook and wrestles the fish in by hand. Tip-ups are popular in the northern states and are primarily used for northern pike and walleye, but some north Missouri anglers have been successful using tip-ups for largemouth bass, channel catfish and even walleye.

The most important aspect of ice fishing is safety. Even though most ponds are safe for ice fishing, warm weather and rain and can deteriorate ice quickly. Also, sheltered ponds that are in a low area or those that contain a buffer of trees around them may not be as safe as those in an open area exposed to the wind. It's a good idea to drill a pilot hole near shore in shallow water to determine ice thickness. Four to five inches of good clear ice is considered safe for ice fishing.

It's best to go ice fishing in pairs and always let someone know where you will be fishing. Some experienced ice anglers suggest carrying a knife or other sharp instrument on a lanyard so that a person who has fallen through has something to grip in the ice—they can pull themselves out, or at least hang on to it as they await help. Some ice fishing anglers like to wear float coats or life vests.

If you would like to enjoy some bluegill



Above: Panfish are popular ice fishing targets. Bottom left: Ice fishing is best in pairs.

or crappie fillets this winter, give ice fishing a try! You might be surprised by how much fun you can have. And for those of you who can't pass up a nice crappie fillet, fish caught in cold water through the ice are a tasty treat next to none. So, when cabin fever has gotten the best of you this winter, bundle up yourself and the kids and head out to your favorite frozen fishing spot.

If you would like to know more about ice fishing, you can contact Darren Thornhill at the Missouri Department of Conservation, Northeast Regional Office at 660/785-2420 or stop in at 3500 South Baltimore Street in Kirksville.

Darren Thornhill Fisheries Management Biologist

# **Northeast Regional Office and Interpretive Center**

3500 S. Baltimore, Kirksville, MO 63501 • mdc.mo.gov/node/279



The Northeast Regional Office and Interpretive Center is located just south of Kirksville on Hwy 63. Come inside to enjoy exhibits, attend programs, purchase permits, and pick up free conservation brochures. Head outside to walk the habitat trail or fish in the stocked pond.

#### **HOURS:**

Building: Monday-Friday, 8 AM-5 PM Trail and Pond: Daily, 4 AM-10 PM

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM: Programs are free. Call 660-785-2420 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.



# **January Events**

### Knee High Naturalists Dinosaur Fish

Jan 7•Monday•10:30 AM
No registration, ages 3-6
Our new aquarium residents are
sometimes called dinosaur fish!
Discover why and get to know the
pallid sturgeon at this program.

# Creature Feature A Fishy Tale

Jan 9•Wednesday•3:30 PM No registration, ages 7-12
Have you met the new residents in the aquarium? Three pallid sturgeon are now making it their home! Hear their story from the days of the dinosaurs to an endangered future at this program.

### Conservation Keepers Endangered Ancients

Jan 19-Saturday-1 PM
No registration, all ages
Our new residents in the aquarium
are not only ancient, but also
endangered. How have they stuck
around for so long? What will happen
to them now? Discover more about
pallid sturgeon at this program!

### Discovery Team Endangered Ancients

Jan 23•Wednesday•3:30 PM No registration, ages 13-15
Our new residents in the aquarium are not only ancient, but also endangered. What has caused the population decline for pallid sturgeon? Can they be restored like the bald eagle? Learn more at this program.

# **February Events**

# Knee High Naturalists Lions? Tigers? Bears!

Feb 4•Monday•10:30 AM No registration, ages 3-6 Many black bears make their home in Missouri. From their amazing noses to a surprising favorite treat, learn more about these big mammals!

### Creature Feature Tracking a Tale

Feb 13•Wednesday•3:30 PM

No registration, ages 7-12

We don't always see wildlife when we

spend time outdoors, but we may see signs that they have passed by. Read the story left by common tracks and other signs of wildlife in Missouri.

# Conservation Keepers Winter Tree ID

Feb 23-Saturday-1 PM

No registration, all ages

Most trees are dormant and bare for
the winter. With the leaves gone, how
can we identify them? Learn what to
look for and put your skills to the test
at this hands-on program!

# Discovery Team Seeking Signs

Feb 27•Wednesday•3:30 PM No registration, ages 13-15 Wild animals are usually pretty shy, which means we may not see them when we go for a hike. Luckily, they often leave tracks and other signs behind that can give us a hint to what's going on in nature. Learn to recognize some common tracks and animal signs at this program.

# **March Events**

### Knee High Naturalists How Bobcat Lost His Tail

Mar 4•Monday•10:30 AM No registration, ages 3-6
Bobcat's tail has gone missing! Join bobcat and his friends as they try to find out what happened—while keeping their own important tails safe!

# **Creature Feature Map & Compass**

Mar 13•Wednesday•3:30 PM No registration, ages 7-12
Learning to navigate nature with a map and compass is not only a useful skill, but can also lead to fun activities like letterboxing and orienteering. Get the basics and some hands-on experience at this program.

# **Northeast Regional Office and Interpretive Center**

3500 S. Baltimore, Kirksville, MO 63501 • mdc.mo.gov/node/279

# **March cont**

### Conservation Keepers Natural Navigation

Mar 16. Saturday. 1 PM

No registration, all ages

How do you navigate in nature?

Learning to use a map and compass
to find your way is a useful skill, but
can also lead to fun and games.

#### Knee High Naturalists Over in the Meadow

Mar 18•Monday•10:30 AM No registration, ages 3-6 Join us for story time as we read "Over in the Meadow". We'll also take a walk to see if we can find some of the habitats and animals we hear about in the story.

# Discovery Team Map & Compass

Mar 27•Wednesday•3:30 PM No registration, ages 7-12
Learning to navigate nature with a map and compass is not only a useful skill, but can also lead to fun activities like letterboxing and orienteering.
Get the basics and some hands-on experience at this program.

# YOUTH RABBIT HUNT JANUARY 12TH 8:00 AM—EARLY AFTERNOON



the shooting sports, and the outdoors in general. We especially take pride in working with people who would not have a chance to experience these outdoor activities if we did not provide the opportunity, though we welcome all to attend our events.

Our local chapter focus is introducing people to

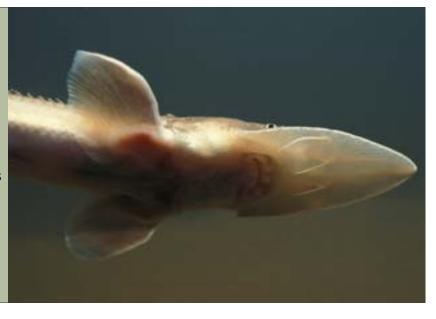
- This event is for youths age 10–16 years of age
- All youths should be accompanied by a guardian.
- Dress according to the weather conditions
- · You may sign up as a group if you like.
- The event is free of charge.
- Lunch will be provided.
- You must sign up to attend the hunt by contacting Sandi Timpe (660-651-0272) or Jim Scott (660-651-1132)
- Space is limited so please RSVP as soon as possible.
- Directions to the hunt will be sent to participants prior to the hunt.





# **Meet the Pallid Sturgeon!**

Three pallid sturgeon came to live at the Northeast Regional Office recently. Pallid sturgeon are federally endangered, mostly due to habitat modification. Historically, these fish lived on the sandy bottoms of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, travelling many miles to spawn. Dams and flood control limit natural reproduction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recovery program tags and releases hatchery-raised sturgeon in the best habitats available, some in Missouri. The fish in our aquarium came from this program. To discover more about how to conserve this dwindling species, visit us for one of our pallid sturgeon programs in January.



# **Hunter Education**



Register online for all Hunter Education courses at mdc.mo.gov/node/3722

A complete listing of courses is also included on this website.

These free 10-hour courses are required for anyone born on or after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri. Students ages 11 and up must pass a test at the end of the course to be certified. Students under 15 years old must be accompanied by an adult and show proof of age. If you have any previous Missouri hunting or fishing permits, or a Missouri Conservation Heritage Card, bring them to class.

LocationDateDay/TimeSwan Lake National Wildlife RefugeFeb. 5, 6, & 75:30 pm-9:00 pmScotland County FirehouseMarch 168:00 am-8:00 pm

# **Educator's Corner**

#### **Discover Nature Schools**

The Discover Nature Schools (DNS) program provides new and interesting curriculum that incorporates hands-on outdoor activities featuring Missouri ecosystems.

Teaching students outside has been shown to help improve test scores and help with behavior issues.

Each unit comes with excellent teacher and student guides. These materials are free to public, private, or homeschool educators. Grant monies are also available for field trips and supplies for K-12 teachers in the public or private school sectors.

New this year – DNS may be taught during summer school!

Contact Karen Armstrong at 660-785-2420 for more information about DNS and training for teachers.

# Wild Game Chili Cook-Off

Saturday, March 23, 2013, noon-4:00 pm

Ray Miller Elementary School

This chili cook-off will feature the finest in wild game gourmet, as well as children's hunting and conservation activities and antler scoring. Proceeds will benefit the Share the Harvest program.

Call 660-665-3766 or go to www.visitkirksville.com for more information.

# The Eastern Bluebird— Missouri's State Bird

Sometimes called "the bluebird of happiness," our state bird is a favorite of many bird watchers. A flash of blue and a cheerful song can brighten the dreariest of late winter mornings. Bluebirds nest in holes, but will often choose a man-made nest box for their home. Nesting begins as early as February, so this is the perfect time to build and place a bluebird nest box!

Visit the Northeast Regional Office to request "Bluebirds in Missouri" or visit mdc. mo.gov/node/2822 for to hear the bluebird's song and watch a video. Instructions on building a bluebird house can be found at mdc.mo.gov/node/4626.



# **Evening With Wildlife**

Tuesday, March 19, 2013 6:00-9:00 pm **Schuyler County High School** No registration required

Visit our annual Evening With Wildlife! This year we'll be in Queen City at the Schuyler County High School. We'll have exhibits and booths from the Department of Conservation as well as many other organizations and vendors. Our guest speaker, Rex Martensen, will be giving a presentation on black bears and mountain lions in Missouri. This free event is open to all ages.

*Visit the Nature Shop at the Northeast Regional Office to find great books, CDs, and other nature-related items.* From January 1 through February 28, you can save 20% on "Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People" and "Tried and True: Missouri Native Plants for Your Yard".

# Clarksville

# Eagle Days

January 26, 2013 • 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. January 27, 2013 • 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



# Apple Shed Theater

This building is **not** heated.

Saturday: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Live eagle programs (presented every hour)
- "Where Eagles Soar" video
- · Activities for kids
- Displays
- · Free eagle art prints
- · Conservation gifts for sale

#### Clarksville Visitor Center

Hwy. 79 at the north edge of town

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- Tourist and eagle information
- Gift shop

#### River Front City Park

Saturday: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- · Eagle viewing through spotting scopes
- · Volunteers available to assist you
- Bonfire

#### Throughout Town

Sponsored by: Missouri Department of Conservation, City of Clarksville and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

# Consider Bringing:

- Family and friends
- Winter outdoor clothing
- Blankets to sit on during eagle program
- Camera
- Binoculars

#### NO ADMISSION FEE!

